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09/891,589	06/27/2001	Kiichiro Takahashi	684.3203	2104
5514	7590	10/15/2003	EXAMINER	
FITZPATRICK CELLA HARPER & SCINTO 30 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA NEW YORK, NY 10112			LIANG, LEONARD S	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			2853	

DATE MAILED: 10/15/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

# Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/891,589

Applicant(s)

TAKAHASHI ET AL.

Examiner

Leonard S Liang

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

## Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

## Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 05 May 2003.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

## Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-26 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-26 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

## Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

## Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- \* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

## Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☒ Other: See Continuation Sheet.

Continuation of Attachment(s) 6). Other: Form PTO 1449 confirming translation.

## DETAILED ACTION

### *Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102*

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

1. Claims 1-3, 8-10, 17-18, and 21-22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Takagi (US Pat 5384587).

Referring to claims 1-3, Takagi discloses an ink jet recording apparatus/method for effecting recording on a recording material by ejecting ink (See figure 1; column 1, lines 8-11), as well as a data processing method of processing data to be supplied to an ink jet recording apparatus for effecting recording on a recording material (See column 1, line 9; The disclosed generation of clear images represents a type of data processing method), both with relative scanning movement by ejecting ink with relative scanning movement between a recording head and the recording material (See figures 1-18; column 1, lines 29-34); an obtaining means/step for obtaining information indicative of an amount of ink to be ejected to each of unit areas provided by dividing an area in the neighborhood of a boundary between adjacent bands of scanning recording material (See figure 2, references 201 and 203; column 4, lines 63-64; column 5, lines 14-17; and column 7, lines 18-25); and a control means/step for reducing the amount of ink to be ejected to the unit area on the basis of the output of the obtaining means (See figure 2, reference 201; column 4, lines 63-64; and column 7, lines 9-33),

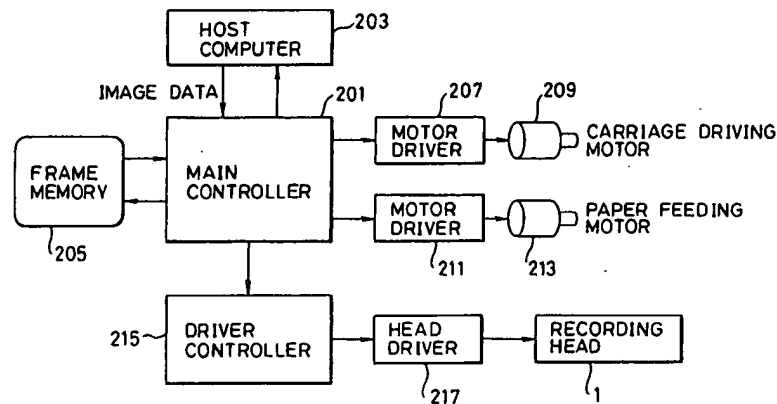
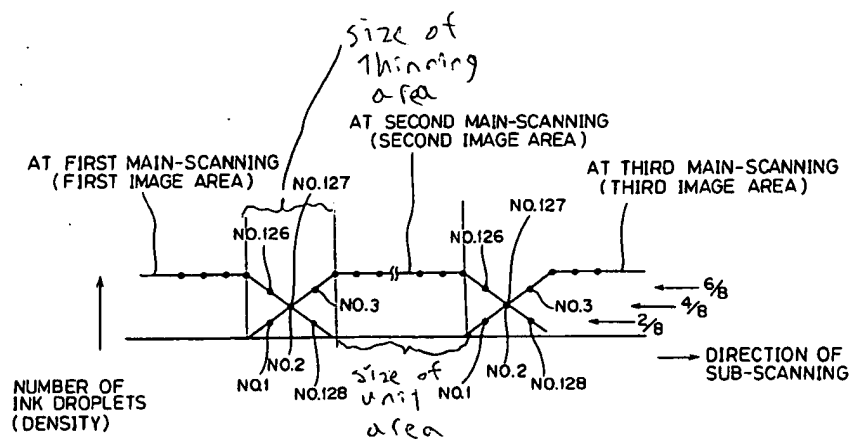


FIG. 2

wherein the unit areas astride the boundary between adjacent one of the bands (See figure 4; column 11, 47-53).



**FIG.4**

Referring to claims 8-10, Takagi discloses an ink jet recording apparatus/method for effecting recording on a recording material by ejecting ink (See figure 1; column 1, lines 8-11), as well as a data

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processing method of processing data to be supplied to an ink jet recording apparatus for effecting recording on a recording material (See column 1, line 9; The disclosed generation of clear images represents a type of data processing method), both with relative scanning movement by ejecting ink with relative scanning movement between a recording head and the recording material (See figures 1-18; column 1, lines 29-34); an obtaining means/step for obtaining information indicative of an amount of ink to be ejected to each of unit areas provided by dividing an area in the neighborhood of a boundary between adjacent bands of scanning recording material (See figure 2, references 201 and 203; column 4, lines 63-64; column 5, lines 14-17; and column 7, lines 18-25); and a control means/step for controlling an amount of the ink ejected to an area to be thinned in the unit areas on the basis of the information obtained by the obtaining means/step (See figure 2, reference 201; column 4, lines 63-64; and column 7, lines 9-33); wherein the sizes of the unit area and the area to be thinned are different from each other (figure 4, drawn in).

Referring to claims 17 and 21, Takagi discloses an ink jet recording apparatus for effecting recording by ejecting ink on a recording material on the basis of data using a recording head for ejecting the ink through a plurality of nozzles (See figure 1; column 1, lines 8-11), with the ink jet recording apparatus comprising a recording control means for imparting relative movement between the recording head and the recording material (See figure 2, references 201, 207, 209, 211, 213; column 7, lines 21-25) and rejecting thing from the recording head in accordance with the ink ejection data (see figure 2, references 201, 203, 205, 215, 217; column 7, lines 18-33) to sequentially effecting recording operations for adjacent recording areas by the ink ejected from the recording head (See figure 3, column 7, lines 37-68; column 8, lines 1-9); correcting means for counting data indicative of ejection of the ink for boundary areas of adjacent recording areas (See figure 2, references 201, 203; column 7, lines 17-21 [which discloses means of indicating image density]; column 8, lines 17-24 [which discloses that image density data is equivalent to the number (N') of ink droplets] - Thus correcting means for counting data are disclosed); and correcting means for reducing the ejection data for the boundary areas (See column 8, lines 21-24). As a result, referring to claim 21, Takagi also discloses a method of correcting image data for an ink jet recording apparatus.

Referring to claims 18 and 22, Takagi teaches that the counting means counts the data for each pixel (See column 8, lines 17-30). Therefore, if one pixel is counted individually, it is inherent that the data for an entire line of pixels is also counted. Takagi further describes how the correcting means correspond to each of the nozzles of the recording head effecting the recording for the boundary areas (See column 7, lines 17-59).

*Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103*

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. Claims 4-6, 11, and 13-14, and 24-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takagi (US Pat 5384587) in view of Nagoshi (US Pat 5359355).

Takagi discloses, with respect to claims 4-7, 11, and 13-14, and 24-26 an ink jet recording apparatus/method for effecting recording on a recording material by ejecting ink (See figure 1; column 1, lines 8-11) using a recording head having a plurality of recording elements (see column 1, lines 10-11), with the ink jet recording apparatus comprising: a recording scanning means/step for effecting recording with relative scanning movement between the recording head and the recording material in a main scan direction (See figures 1-18; column 1, lines 29-34) and a subscanning means/step for imparting relative scanning movement between the recording material and the recording head in a direction which is different from the main scan direction substantially each time after completion of recording scan in the main scan direction (See figures 1-18; column 1; lines 29-34), wherein the unit areas exist astride the boundary between adjacent one of the bands (See figure 4; column 11, 47-53), and wherein the sizes of the unit area and the area to be thinned are different from each other (figure 4, drawn in).

Takagi differs from the claimed invention in that it does not explicitly disclose a dot count means/step for counting the ink ejection data number for each of the unit areas provided by dividing an area in the neighborhood of a boundary between adjacent bands of scanning recording of the recording head on the recording material. It also does not disclose that this dot count means counts the ink ejection data number with weighting for each of the bands, nor does it disclose that the dot count means counts the ink ejection data number with weighting which is different in the sub-scan direction. Nor does it explicitly disclose a determining means/step for determining a thinning rate for each of the unit areas on the basis of the ink ejection data number counted by the dot count means. Finally, Takagi does not

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explicitly disclose a thinning means/step for effecting a thinning process to the ink ejection data on the basis of the thinning rate determined by the determining means/step.

However, Takagi does teach, with respect to claims 4-6, 11, and 13 that "The number of ink droplets that may be landed on one pixel may be controlled based on the density data." (See column 4, lines 63-64). Furthermore, in regards to Figure 3, Takagi teaches "the number of ink droplets forming each pixel according to image data differs from each other." From the descriptions of figures 3 and 4, it is clear that each of the unit areas are divided in the neighborhood of a boundary between adjacent bands of scanning recording of the recording head on the recording material.

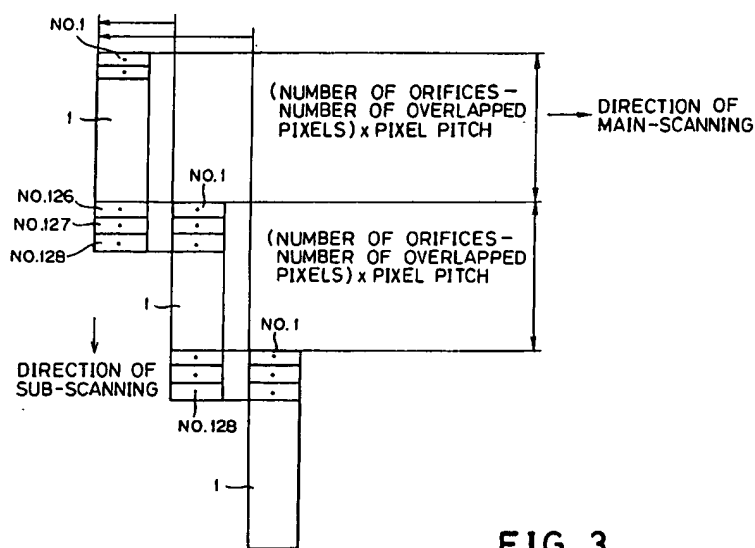


FIG. 3

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Therefore, in order to properly enable the production of the different number of ink droplets that may be landed on one pixel, there must be an implicit means for counting the ink ejection data number. Thus, it will be assumed that Takagi implicitly implies a dot count means/step for counting the ink ejection data number for each of the unit areas provided by dividing an area in the neighborhood of a boundary between adjacent bands of scanning recording of the recording head on the recording material, though it does not explicitly state so. Furthermore, Takagi teaches, with respect to claim 5, "When recording is performed on the recording sheet at the first main-scanning time, the orifices Nos. 1, 2, ..., and 128 are used. At this time, as shown in FIG. 4, the numbers of ink droplets discharged from the orifices Nos. 126, 127 and 128 are determined as  $N \times 6/8$ ,  $N \times 4/8$  and  $N \times 2/8$  respectively for forming the first image area." (See figures 3 and 4; column 7, lines 53-59) Here, the factors 6/8, 4/8, and 2/8 represent different

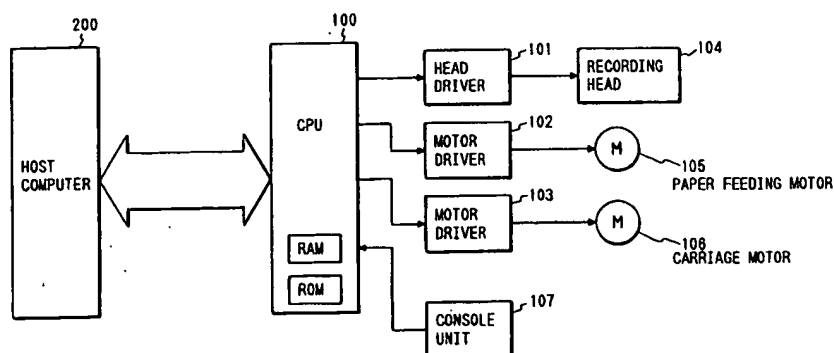


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weights that are applied to the ink ejection bands. Next, Takagi teaches, with respect to claim 6, "a recording sheet is moved or sub-scanned upward by 125 pixels so that the orifices Nos. 1, 2, and 3 overlap part of the first image area formed by the orifices Nos. 126, 127 and 128 respectively..." (See figure 3; column 7, lines 60-64) Thus Takagi discloses that the dot count means/step not only counts the ink ejection data number with weighting for each of the bands, but it also counts the ink ejection data number with weighting which is different in the sub-scan direction.

Nagoshi teaches, with respect to claims 4, 11, and 13. "The CPU 100 controls the driving operation of the carriage motor 106 so that the single- and multi-pass print modes have different scan speeds. When the CPU 100 receives data from the host computer 200, it drives the carriage motor 106 to cause the carriage unit 2 to travel, thereby starting the main scan operation" (See figure 2, references 100, 106, and 200; column 4, lines 32-39). Thus, Nagoshi discloses a CPU 100, which not only receives data (i.e. dot count data [of which data about distance from boundary is inherent]) from the host computer, but also from that data, controls scanning speed, which directly relates to thinning rate in this invention. Thus Nagoshi discloses a determining means/step for determining a thinning rate for each of the unit areas.

FIG. 2



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Nagoshi also discloses a thinning means/step for effecting a thinning process to the ink ejection data on the basis of the thinning rate determined by determining means (See abstract; figures 3-9 and 14-15; column 1, lines 60-68; and column 2, lines 34-42)..

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include the determining and thinning means/steps disclosed by Nagoshi into the ink jet recording apparatus disclosed by Takagi in order to perform thinning. The reason this is obvious is because though Takagi does not explicitly mention, "thinning", the scanning process it discloses would be considered "thinning" by one of ordinary skill in the art. Thus, the motivation of the skilled artisan in adopting the determining and thinning means disclosed by Nagoshi is to gain the benefit of being able to control thinning rate, thus reducing blurring and color mixing in the image. The combination naturally suggests determining a thinning rate for each of the unit areas on the basis of the ink ejection data number counted by the dot count means/step.

3. Claim 7 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takagi, in view of Nagoshi, as applied to claim 4 above, and further in view of Arai (EP Patent 0516420A2).

Takagi discloses, with respect to claim 7, a recording head, which ejects a plurality of **ink droplets** (See column 13, lines 58-59).

Takagi differs from the claimed invention in that it does not explicitly disclose that the recording head ejects a plurality of **inks**.

Arai does disclose a recording head, which ejects a plurality of inks (See column 7, lines 57-58).

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to allow the recording head disclosed by Takagi to eject the plurality of inks disclosed by Arai in order to produce an image. The motivation for the skilled artisan in doing so is to obtain not only black and white images, but also color images, which are considered by many of ordinary skill in the art to be more aesthetically pleasing than black and white images.

4. Claims 8-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takagi, in view of Arai (EP Patent 0516420A2).

Takagi discloses, with respect to claims 8-10, an ink jet recording apparatus/method for effecting recording on a recording material by ejecting ink (See figure 1; column 1, lines 8-11), as well as a data processing method of processing data to be supplied to an ink jet recording apparatus for effecting recording on a recording material (See column 1, line 9; The disclosed generation of clear images represents a type of data processing method), both with relative scanning movement by ejecting ink with relative scanning movement between a recording head and the recording material (See figures 1-18; column 1, lines 29-34); an obtaining means/step for obtaining information indicative of an amount of ink

to be ejected to each of unit areas provided by dividing an area in the neighborhood of a boundary between adjacent bands of scanning recording material (See figure 2, references 201 and 203; column 4, lines 63-64; column 5, lines 14-17; and column 7, lines 18-25); and a control means/step for controlling an amount of the ink ejected to an area to be thinned in the unit areas on the basis of the information obtained by the obtaining means/step (See figure 2, reference 201; column 4, lines 63-64; and column 7, lines 9-33),

Takagi differs from the claimed invention in that it does not explicitly disclose that the inks of the unit area and the area to be thinned are different from each other.

Arai does disclose, "When different multi-pass intervals are set in correspondence with different colors "boundary blurring" can be more effectively prevented." (See column 9, lines 22-30). This implies that the inks of the unit area and the area to be thinned are different from each other.

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include the teachings of Arai that the inks of the unit area and the areas to be thinned are different from each other into the ink jet recording apparatus/method and data processing method disclosed by Takagi in order to improve the thinning process. The motivation for the skilled artisan in doing so is to gain the benefit of more effectively preventing "boundary blurring", which is a problem familiar to one of ordinary skill in the art.

5. Claims 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takagi, in view of Nagoshi, as applied to claim 11 above, and further in view of Matsubara (US Pat 5488398).

Takagi, in view of Nagoshi differs from the claimed invention in that it does not explicitly disclose that the thinning area is divided into a plurality of areas for each of which the thinning rate is determined.

Matsubara discloses, with respect to claim 12, a process of multi-scanning in a thinning area where part of the area is printed during the first scan and part of the area is printed during the second scan (See column 2, lines 17-23 and column 5, lines 21-32). This implies that the thinning area is divided into a plurality of areas, one area, which is printed upon during the first scan, the other area, which is printed upon during the second scan. Matsubara further discloses a "producing means for producing thinned recording data by thinning recording data supplied to said plurality of recording heads at a predetermined rate" (See column 10, lines 52-54), which implies that each of the plurality of areas within the thinning area had its own determined thinning rate.

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It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include the teachings of Matsubara that the thinning area is divided into a plurality of areas for each of which the thinning rate is determined, and said thinning means effects the thinning process on the basis of the thinning rate determined for each of the areas, into the apparatus disclosed by Takagi, in view of Nagoshi in order to improve the thinning process. The motivation for the skilled artisan in doing so is to gain the benefit of having an image with greater image quality, lacking in blurred colors, and other common problems known to one of ordinary skill in the art.

6. Claims 15-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takagi, in view of Nagoshi, as applied to claim 14 above, and further in view of Lahut (US Pat 5070345).

Takagi, in view of Nagoshi, differs from the claimed invention in that it does not explicitly disclose that the area to be thinned is set only in one of the adjacent bands, nor does it explicitly disclose that the area to be thinned is set only in one of the bands adjacent a sheet discharging side.

Lahut teaches, with respect to claims 15 and 16, "In this way, any dot in a given row is printed only when either (1) there is no corresponding dot in two adjacent rows..." (See column 4, lines 44-46) Lahut's reasoning for this procedure was to "prevent adjacent dot rows to fuse together forming a band of dots per pass." (See column 5, lines 7-8) In the same way, this teaching shows that if an area to be thinned is set in two adjacent bands, banding will occur, which is the very problem that Takagi is trying to fix. Thus, Lahut does disclose that the area to be thinned is set only in one of the adjacent bands. Furthermore, Lahut discloses that "no two adjacent rows are printed during a pass of the print head in the same direction (See column 4, lines 53-68), which implies that the area to be thinned is set only in one of the bands adjacent a sheet discharging side.

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include the teachings of Lahut that the area to be thinned is set only in one of the adjacent bands and one of the bands adjacent a sheet discharging side into the apparatus disclosed by Takagi, in view of Nagoshi in order to improve the thinning process. The motivation of the skilled artisan in doing so is to gain the benefit of a reduction in banding.

7. Claims 19 and 23 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takagi, as applied to claims 2 and 22 above.

Takagi discloses a predetermined reduction amount (See column 8, lines 17-24).

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Takagi differs from the claimed invention in that it does not disclose that the error between the predetermined amount and an actually reduced amount is added to an amount to be reduced for another line of pixels.

However, Takagi does disclose, with respect to claims 19 and 23, the ability to adjust for errors for each recording head (See column 8, lines 25-30).

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to allow the error between the predetermined amount and an actually reduced amount to be added to an amount to be reduced for another line of pixels, as one means of the error adjustment disclosed by Takagi.

8. Claim 20 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takagi, as applied to claim 17 above, in view of Nagoshi.

Takagi discloses ink-jet recording (See column 1, lines 9-10).

Takagi differs from the claimed invention in that it does not explicitly disclose bubble ejection generated by thermal energy.

Nagoshi does disclose, with respect to claim 20, bubble ejection generation by thermal energy (See column 10, lines 18-25).

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to apply the teachings of Nagoshi to the apparatus disclosed by Takagi in order to create an ink jet recording apparatus wherein the recording head ejects by a pressure of a bubble generated by thermal energy. This is because it is well known to one of ordinary skill in the art that an ink-jet recording apparatus does eject bubbles generated by thermal energy. Thus, it is inherent to the apparatus disclosed by Takagi that it does eject by a pressure of a bubble generated by thermal energy.

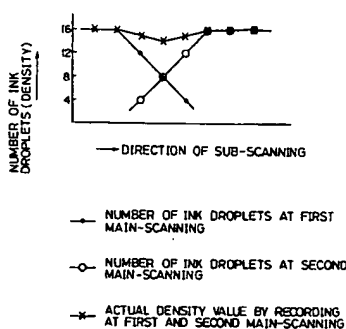
#### *Response to Arguments*

9. Applicant's arguments filed on 05/05/03 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

The applicant argues concerning the reference of Takagi: "However, the total number of ink droplets ejected for the overlapped areas is not reduced or thinned since the fraction of ink droplets not ejected during an initial scan is ejected during a subsequent scan. Therefore, Takagi is not seen to disclose or suggest at least the feature of reducing the amount of ink to be ejected or thinning the ejection data for unit areas which exist astride a boundary between adjacent bands of scanning recording." The examiner has three points to note in reply: First, the examiner believes that the applicant is trying to

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improperly limit the claimed invention. The claimed invention states “control means for reducing the amount of ink to be ejected to the unit areas on the basis of the information obtained by the obtaining means.” There is no disclosure that it is the **total** amount of ink being reduced. The examiner believes that the interpretation that the amount of ink being reduced for each individual unit area is also permissible and is shown by Takagi. Secondly, the examiner believes that Takagi does disclose a **total** amount of ink being reduced. The examiner draws the applicant’s attention to figure 9.



The applicant’s contention seems to be that no ink is reduced because the sum of the fraction of the ink droplets ejected equal the total number of ink droplets ejected. However, figure 9 shows that this is not the case. It is clear that the density of the overlap portion is reduced. Finally, the examiner draws the applicant’s attention to column 8, lines 17-24, “Moreover, in the above explanation of the image recording, it has been assumed that pixels of recording image are made of the same number of ink droplets. Actually, the number of ink droplets forming each pixel according to image data differs from each other.” This teaching shows that figure 4 is meant only to be a model of the invention, and not a practical representation of it. Thus, the applicant’s arguments using figure 4 as a standard of basis are considered inappropriate.

The applicant further argues that the feature of different sizes between the unit area and the area to be thinned need to be addressed. This has been done so in the new rejection above.

Finally, the applicant argues, “In particular, the applied references are not seen to disclose or suggest at least the feature of counting data indicative of ejection of ink for boundary areas of adjacent recording areas and reducing the ejection data for the boundary areas.” The examiner believes that this argument has been addressed above.

As for formal matters, the examiner acknowledges that the translation for JP 11-188898 has been received.

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*Conclusion*

10. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Smith et al (US Pat 6132021) discloses a dynamic adjustment of under and over printing levels in a printer.

Vinals et al (US Pat 6375307) discloses a printing apparatus and method.

Helm (US Pat 6452618) discloses carriage velocity control to improve print quality and extend printhead life in ink-jet printer.

Takahashi et al (US Pat 6623093) discloses an ink jet printing apparatus and ink jet printing method.

Courtney (US Pat 5610638) discloses temperature sensitive print mode selection.

Matsubara et al (US Pat 5594478) discloses an ink jet recording apparatus for divisionally driving a recording head with a plurality of ink jet orifices grouped into blocks.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Leonard S Liang whose telephone number is (703) 305-4754. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:30-5 Monday-Friday.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Stephen Meier can be reached on (703) 308-4896. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (703) 872-9306.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0956.

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**STEPHEN MEIER**  
**SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER**